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National Intelligence Officer for Narcotics  
Intelligence Coordination and Strategy Meeting

30 January 1987

1. The NIO/Narcotics opened the meeting with a brief discussion of current issues. They included:

- An assessment by the NIO/Narcotics on alleged connections between drug traffickers and anti-Sandinista (Contra) groups. This assessment was requested by the Director/INR on behalf of Assistant Secretary Abrams.
- A review of Community interest in a special estimate to be drafted under the auspices of the NIO/S&T on potential research and development options available to narcotics traffickers. It was the consensus of the group that such an estimate was worth doing and should 1) emphasize current R&D interests of drug trafficker; and 2) cover the entire spectrum of narcotics (cultivation, production and trafficking).
- The NIO/Narcotics also reviewed current and projected papers scheduled for NIC review. These included 1) a redraft of an earlier IIM on cocaine which will now focus on the international cocaine industry; and 2) an IIM (Concept and TORs now being drafted) on the prospects for regional control of opiate trafficking in Southeast and Southwest Asia.

NNBIS

2. The NNBIS representative presented a review of Hat Trick III. He pointed out that thus far it has been an effective operation with the seizures: 18 aircraft, 77 vessels, and 530 vehicles. The air/maritime interdiction effort in the Caribbean concluded another "pulse and surge" effort on 25 January and the following observations could be made:

- The traffickers have been paying attention to the interdiction effort; appear a little confused by the "pulse and surge" nature of interdiction effort; and appear willing to wait it out.

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- Air trafficking activity appears to have shifted to the West; and a Customs air operation is now in progress to determine the extent of such activity.
- There has been a significant enhancement of US radar coverage in the Caribbean to target trafficking activity.
- Marijuana is in short supply in the US and prices are up.
- There has been an increase in containerized cargo shipments from Jamaica (this issue constitutes one of the more important intelligence gaps).
- On comparative merits, the Mexican Navy appears to be exerting a more cooperative effort.

#### Latin American Narcotics Control Laws

3. Representatives from CIA/Office of General Counsel (OGC) gave a presentation on OGC's survey of the narcotics control laws of selected Latin American countries and the identification of areas where changes could be made to bolster the overall anti-drug strategy. It was pointed out that although the countries differ in some ways, there are striking similarities. For example, many lack political control over vast areas and for many it is extremely difficult for the federal judiciary to mount a sophisticated criminal prosecution. Some of the points mentioned during the discussion included:

- Brazil's new draft of its constitution eliminates previous prohibitive language relative to electronic surveillance.
- Many countries in Latin America have no independent judiciary.
- Several countries leave open the question of extradition of nationals.
- OGC's project represents a unique effort to explore foreign legal systems with a view not only for improving narcotics control laws, but also as an adjunct to other bilateral negotiations.

#### Venezuela

4. OGI presented a detailed picture of the potential for Venezuela to become a significant narcotics spillover country. Recent reporting on drug seizures and trafficking activity indicates Venezuela is being exploited by Colombian drug trafficking organizations.

- Two events in 1986, the discovery in Miami of 6,900 pounds of cocaine shipped from Venezuela and some 26 tons of marijuana on Venezuela's frontier with Colombia, point to a significant Colombian trafficking infrastructure operating in Venezuela.

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- Drug smuggling is most prevalent on Venezuela's western frontier with Colombia, in the states of Zulia, Tachira, and Apure where traffickers use clandestine airstrips to transship cocaine and marijuana directly to the US or to staging areas in the Caribbean, such as Aruba and Margarita.
- Traffickers also smuggle drugs overland or by sea and use Venezuela's extensive Orinoco river system to move cocaine from refining facilities in Colombia to Trinidad and Tobago before linking up to ships bound for the US or Europe.

There are indications that Venezuela already may be more than a downstream operation for Colombian trafficking organizations.

- Venezuelan police have discovered small-scale cocaine laboratories in rural and urban areas, and there are reports of experimental coca fields in remote mountain ranges.
- There is evidence indicating that marijuana cultivation is increasing along the northwest border with Colombia, where according to Venezuelan National Guard officers, fields are tended by Colombian growers.

5. In our view, Venezuela presents excellent opportunities for Colombians who want to decentralize their facilities--such as laboratories, transshipment points, and stash sites--into secure areas.

- Venezuela's geography offers drug traffickers a number of opportunities for relocating processing facilities.
- Processing chemicals are readily available from Brazil and Venezuela is already a major transshipment point for chemicals enroute to Colombian processing sites.
- The threat against the traffickers is small as Venezuelan authorities lack sufficient resources to interdict large volumes of drug shipments or to root out major traffickers.

6. A much more impelling question would be forced on the Intelligence Community if the Colombian government were to launch an all-out police and military effort against the traffickers.

- We believe the Medellin Cartel would resist a wholesale shift of operations to another country and would elect to fight Colombian authorities.

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- However, we cannot foresee a wholesale shift of drug activity that would lead to the same concentration of drug traffickers and processing facilities in Venezuela or any other country as currently exists in Colombia.
- Some additional spillover into Venezuela, Ecuador, or Brazil could occur, but we believe the majority of Colombian drug traffickers would be more likely to reestablish their operations in Peru.

7. In our judgment, susceptibility to corruption is a factor Colombian traffickers will weigh carefully if they feel compelled to move numerous refineries out of Colombia to reestablish them in Venezuela.

- Colombians have a foothold in Venezuela but the levels of corruption and influence are not extensive enough to cause the leading traffickers to view Venezuela as a safe haven during an extended crackdown by Colombian authorities.
- Venezuelan border patrol and law enforcement authorities are already confronting traffickers in remote frontier areas, and we believe these confrontations will increase especially if there is an extended crackdown in Colombia.

8. Community representatives commented on the following:

- DEA commented on the increase in physical violence by traffickers and the deaths of two DEA agents already this year.
- USCG announced that a Coast Guard attache was in the DAO in Mexico City as of 17 January and that a new air interdiction squadron had been activated in Norfolk.
- FBI discussed the formation of a separate unit to focus on the principal narcotics organizations. The major thrust of the FBI's interest will be on long-term investigations.
- Customs announced that it would be developing a briefing on the C<sup>3</sup>I centers. It also announced that it would be conducting overseas enforcement training programs over the next few months in Uruguay, Egypt and Greece.

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